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RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUYNAAAC/COMNAVFORJAPAN YOKOSUKA JA PRIORITY
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
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RUHBANB/OKINAWA FLD OFC US FORCES JAPAN CP BUTLER JA PRIORITY
RHMFIUU/COMUSJAPAN YOKOTA AB JA PRIORITY
INFO RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA 8913
RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE 2329
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 4973
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EAP/J, EAP/P, PM;
USTR FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE;
TREASURY FOR OASIA/IMI;
SECDEF FOR OASD/PA;
CP BUTLER OKINAWA FOR AREA FIELD OFFICE;
PACOM HONOLULU FOR PUBLIC DIPLOMACY ADVISOR

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION - SYRIA-IRAQ-IRAN RELATIONS -
TOKYO

LEAD STORIES: Wednesday morning's Mainichi front-paged a report from Cairo concerning an agreement between Syria and Iraq to fully restore diplomatic relations.

¶1. "Syria, Iran Improving Ties with Iraq" The liberal Mainichi's Cairo correspondent Takahashi commented (11/22): "Syria restored diplomatic relations with Iraq Tuesday, a move that is believed to be a big step toward improving ties with the US and Europe. Iranian President Ahmadinejad also proposed a meeting of the Iranian, Iraqi, and Syrian leaders to discuss security in Iraq, which continues to deteriorate. Syria and Iran, which the US regards as state sponsors of terrorism, appear to be launching a diplomatic offensive by improving ties with Iraq while taking advantage of the rising calls in the US for dialogue with those nations following the Democratic takeover of Congress. It is believed that Syria's full restoration of diplomatic ties with Iraq has a dual purpose of laying the groundwork for improving relations with the US and preventing confusion in Iraq from spilling over into Syria."

¶2. "Syria, Iran, and Iraq Likely to Form Axis" Mainichi's Tehran correspondent Kasuga wrote (11/22): "A member of the Iranian parliament made remarks Tuesday confirming that Iranian President Ahmadinejad has proposed a meeting with Iraqi President Talabani and Syrian President Assad to discuss security in Iraq. It appears that the Iranian president made the proposal in response to rising calls in the US and Britain for a review of Iraq policy and a growing belief that Iraq's security cannot be restored without the involvement of Iran and Syria. Iranian Foreign Minister Mottaki previously disclosed to Iraqi journalists that Iraq, Syria, and Iran are trying to

establish an axis in the Middle East. With the restoration Tuesday of Syria-Iraq relations, the likelihood of one forming has become much greater."

SCHIEFFER